

**An Archaeological Survey
of the Rialto Village Development,
Northern Bexar County, Texas**

By

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SUBMITTED TO

**Rialto Village Development
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San Antonio, Texas 78257**

**Report No. 71
Abasolo Archaeological Consultants
San Antonio, Texas
2008**

Abstract

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted an archeological survey of 24 acres proposed for the Rialto Village Development in northern Bexar County. A 100% pedestrian survey was carried out at the construction site to insure that no significant archaeological or historical resources are damaged or destroyed due to the planned work. The work was done under contract with Rialto Village development at the request of the City of San Antonio. No archaeological sites were found on the property although three areas of thinly scattered historic trash was noted, one of which may date to the late 19th or early part of the 20th century. Also, a light scatter of fire-cracked rock was also recorded but no cultural features such as hearths or burned rock midden were associated with the scatter. No further archeological work is recommended.

Introduction

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted an archeological survey of 24 acres proposed for the Rialto Village Development in northern Bexar County. A 100% pedestrian survey was carried out at the construction site to insure that no significant archaeological or historical resources are damaged or destroyed due to the planned work. The work was done under contract with Rialto Village development at the request of the City of San Antonio. Field work was carried out by Dr. Harry Shafer and Dr. Thomas Hester on May 7, 2008.

A review of maps and plans provided by Rialto Village indicates the location of the project lies immediately west of IH-10W and Ralph Fair Road (Fig. 1). The development borders an unnamed northern tributary of Leon Creek and is within the Balcones Canyonlands northwest of San Antonio (Fig. 2). Archaeologically this physiographic region is known for its high density of prehistoric archaeological sites that includes mounded accumulations of fire-cracked rock (called burned rock middens) resulting from the repeated activities of constructing and dismantling earth ovens, large campsites located along creek terraces near springs or along spring-fed streams, upland scatters of chipped stone and burned rock from hearths probably the result of short-term hunting or collecting camps, and vertical shaft cave cemeteries. Sites of each of these categories and historic sites such as 19th century ranch complexes and a stage station have been recorded near the area of the development. The 24 acre area was considered as a high probability area for archaeological sites.

The Setting

Rialto Village development lies within the Balcones Canyonlands in the Leon Creek drainage. The property is situated west of I-10 and is bordered by the I-10 corridor and a tributary of Leon Creek. The property had been cleared of underbrush and juniper prior to the survey (Figs. 4 and 5). Geologically, the area in and around Rialto Village is mapped as Glen Rose limestone of the Cretaceous period (Arnold 1959). The soils in the units surveyed in the present project fall within Crawford-Bexar stony soils (Fig. 3). These are shallow reddish brown soils overlying limestone bedrock or exfoliated limestone (Taylor et al. 1962). The native vegetation of this part of the Leon Creek valley includes live oak, mountain laurel, ashe juniper, persimmon, prickly pear cactus and sotol.

Archaeological Background

Regional Culture History

More than 2250 archaeological sites have been documented in Bexar County (Texas Archeological Site Atlas, Texas Historical Commission). Based on studies at a number of these sites, the broad outline of the archaeology of northern Bexar County can be discerned. Major time periods and site types are briefly noted here.

The **Paleoindian** period, 9,200-6,800 B.C., has distinctive chipped stone spear points used in hunting mammoth and other late Ice Age mammals early in the period. Other spear types appear with a shift to bison, deer and other game after the Ice Age ended around 8000 B.C. (Hester 1986). Known site types in northern Bexar County are *campsites* with flint-chipping debris from stone-tool making and repair. One site of Clovis age (9,200 B.C.) was excavated near FM1604 and Leon Creek (Collins et al. 2003). A later site, dating around 7,500 B.C., was investigated on the grounds of St. Mary's Hall on Salado Creek (Hester 1986).

Sites of the following **Archaic** period are common in northern Bexar County. These peoples were hunters and gatherers as in the earlier Paleoindian period, but lived in an environment very similar to those of modern times. Projectile points used to tip spears (often erroneously called "arrowheads") change in shape through time, from 6,800 B.C. to 500 A.D. (Turner and Hester 1993). Archaeologists use these forms to recognize more specific time frames within the Archaic (e.g., Early, Middle and Late Archaic). In northern Bexar County, the most distinctive Archaic site is the *burned rock midden*. These large accumulations of fire-cracked limestone result from the use of earth-oven cooking starting around 3,000 B.C. (Black et al. 1997; Nickel et al. 2000). Such features were part of *larger campsites*, with large amounts of flint debris from tool-making; sometimes, animal bone (dietary remains) and charcoal that can be used for radiocarbon dating. Other Archaic site types include *lithic procurement* areas (where flint cobbles eroded out of the Edwards limestone and were processed), *lithic scatters* (lightly-used areas probably representing short-term hunting and gathering activities), and rarely, *sinkhole burials* (Archaic peoples often disposed of their dead by placing them in sinkholes and caverns; Bement 1994).

By 700 A.D., there began to be some changes in the long hunter-gatherer life way. The **Late Prehistoric** is first seen with the introduction of the bow and arrow. The stone arrow points are very small (mistakenly called "bird points"), but could be used in hunting game of any size. By 1300 A.D., the economy emphasized buffalo-hunting. Most sites of this era include *campsites*, often in areas previously used by Archaic peoples, *lithic scatters* of this age; and the *lithic procurement areas* of earlier times continued to be used.

During the **Historic** period, the best known archaeological remains are *ranch and farm houses of cut stone*, dating from the 1840s through the 1880s. Stacked- stone fences also occur (Shafer and Hester 2007b). Such sites, including those without surviving structures, are recognized from 19th century pottery fragments, artifacts of glass and metal, etc. Later Historic houses and farmsteads, through the early 1900s, are also found.

Nearby Sites

Although there has been considerable archaeological research in Bexar County, there are no recorded prehistoric or historic sites in the Rialto Village area (Texas Archeological Site Atlas). The nearest site is 41BX1590, about .75 miles to the southwest, on the south

side of Leon Creek. It is a 1940s-1950s homestead, with abundant glass and metal artifacts of the period. However, it was in poor condition and does not have any historical significance (Texas Archeological Site Atlas, Texas Historical Commission). Shafer and Hester (2007a) have recorded a small burned rock midden about 1.25 miles west of Rialto Village. It is located on a tributary of Leon Creek. In addition, Shafer and Hester (2007c) recorded sites 41BX1723 and 1724 at the Terra Mont development. The first site is a lithic scatter, while the second is a burned rock midden or tightly clustered hearths. To the south, the Texas Archeological Site Atlas shows sites 41BX556 and 557 in present-day Leon Springs. Both are mid-19th century stone structures.

Survey Findings

The property had been cleared of most trees except for the large oaks and the surface visibility was very good (Figs. 4 and 5). The property is bordered on the west side by an often-deep channel of an unnamed tributary of Leon Creek. The setting is one that we would have predicted as being very high probability for archaeological sites. However, after a thorough walk over of the property we did not find a single recognizable or intact site. The only prehistoric archaeological evidence encountered was a scatter of fire-cracked burned rock and a single flake at the southern end of the property. These fire-cracked rocks were intermixed with unburned limestone as the soils here are very shallow or non-existent (Fig. 6). There may have been a shallow burned rock midden here but if so, it had been scraped away to make low bluff line bordering the creek. The base of an untyped reworked Archaic period dart point (Fig. 7) and three flakes represent isolated finds not associated with any features or concentrations (see Fig. 2).

There were three ill-defined scatters of historic trash that were also noted (Fig. 2). One was along the east side near the I-10 corridor (Fig. 2); white stoneware and glass that was not heavily patinated were observed. In the northern portion of the property, however, a thin trash scatter that dates to the early 20th century (or the very late 19th century) was noted in the form of rusty tin cans, patinated glass, a half-gallon rusty tin can, and a piece of a spring support for a buggy top (Figs. 8 and 9). This type of spring support was patented in the early 1890s in the United States and in Canada (e.g., Bougie 1893). Historic trash consists of a thin surface scatter and is not associated with any recognizable historic structure foundation or other features and may be tied in to another small trash scatter observed in the western edge of the property, south of its northwest corner.

Recommendations

Since none of the prehistoric or historic artifacts were associated with any site or feature, and no archaeological site or cultural properties will be impacted by the Rialto Village development, no further archaeological work is recommended.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the cooperation of Danny VanDeWalle of Rialto Village development, and Bob Skiles for his assistance in identifying the buggy top spring support.

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Figures

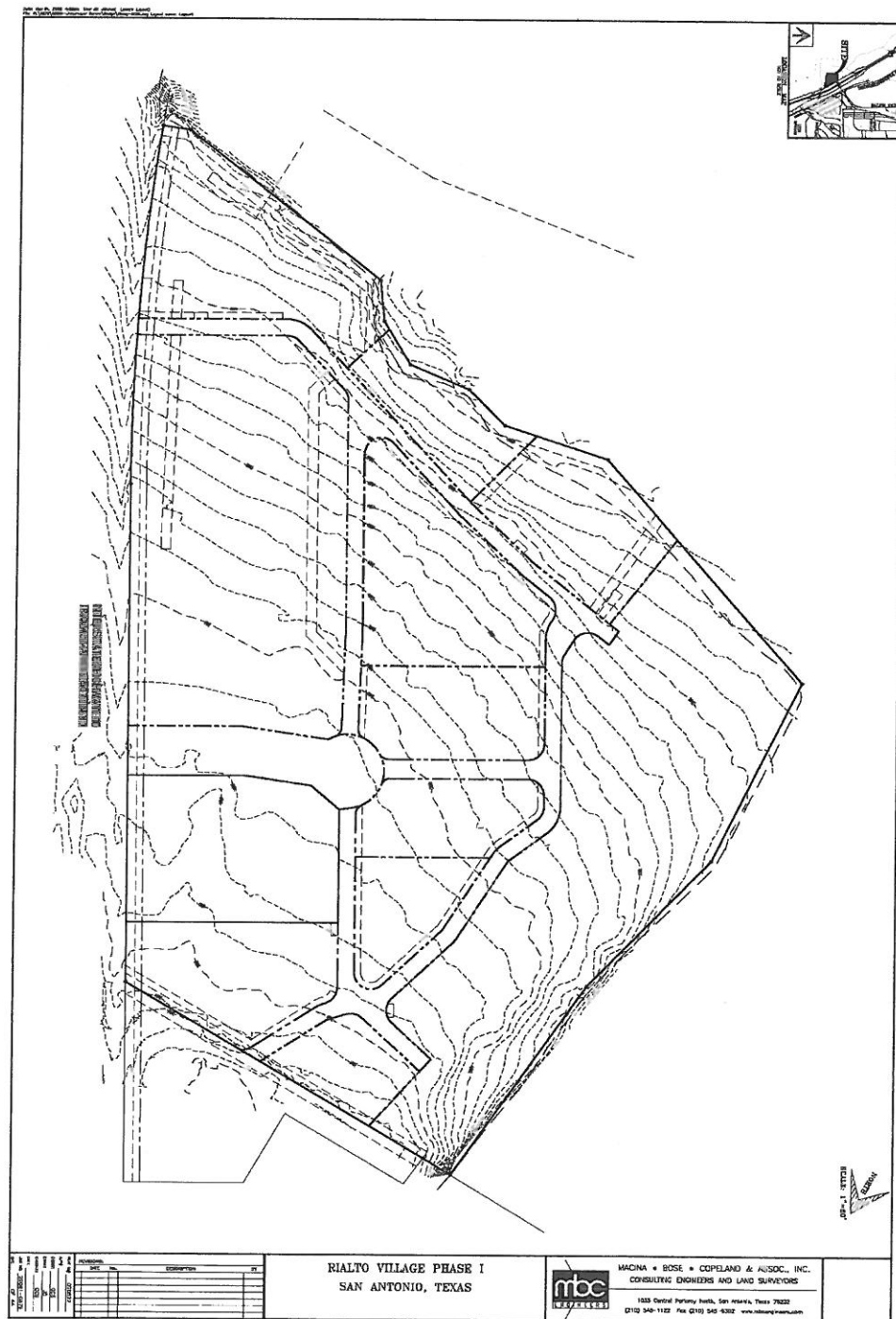


Figure 1. Rialto Village Phase I plat. Image provided by Rialto Village Development.

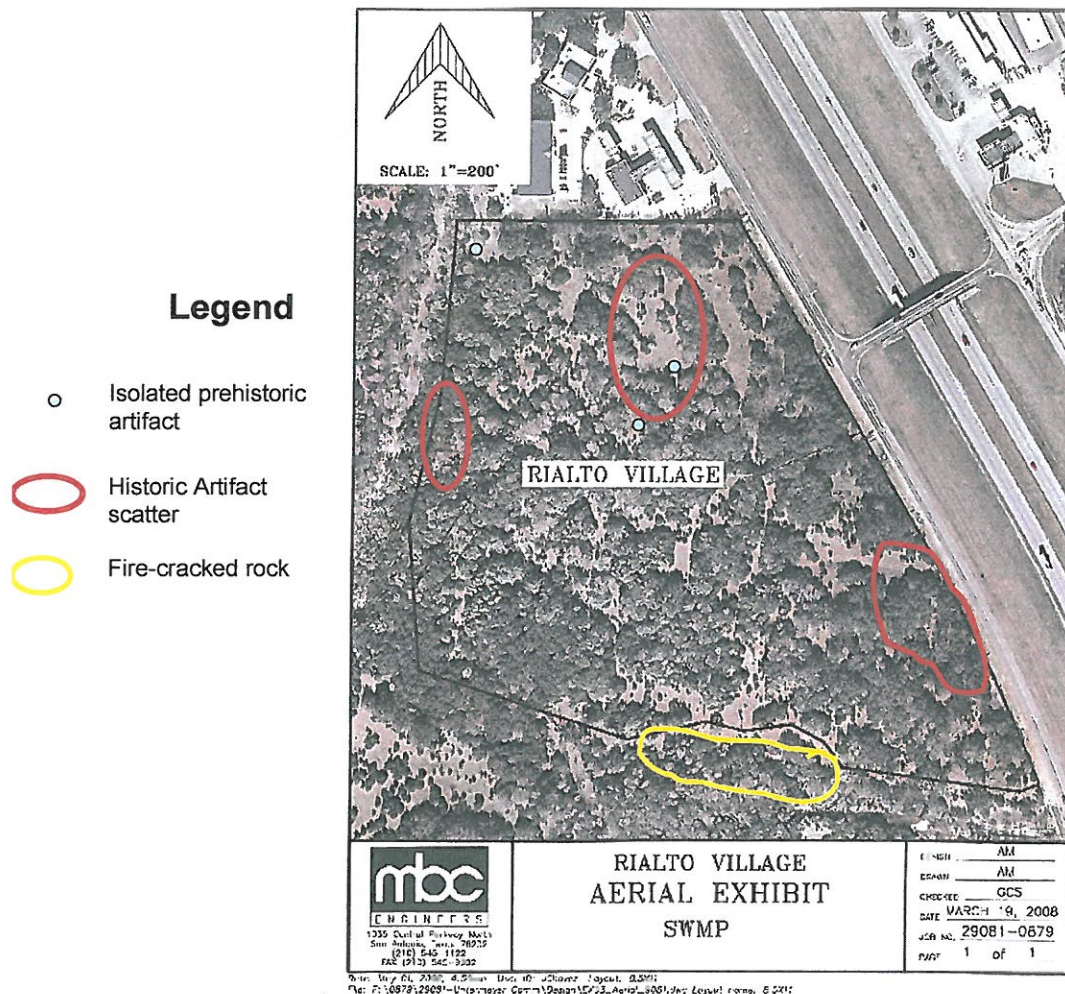


Figure 2. Aerial perspective of the Rialto Village Phase I project showing the location of cultural resources observed on the property. Aerial view provided by Rialto Village Development.



Figure 3. Depression resulting from the removal of a large juniper tree showing the shallow Crawford-Bexar stony soils.



Figure 4. View of Rialto Village property looking south.



Figure 5. View of the southern portion of the Rialto Village property; note cleared landscape that provided excellent surface visibility.



Figure 6. The area at the southern end of the property showing the location of the fire-cracked rock scatter; I-10 corridor is in the background.



Figure 7. Two views of a reworked Archaic period dart point base observed on the surface of the property.



Figure 8. Fragment of a spring-support for a buggy top. The piece is labeled b3 in the patent image shown in Figure 9.

(No Model.)

S. BOUGIE.
SPRING SUPPORT FOR BUGGY TOPS.

No. 502,606.

Patented Aug. 1, 1893.

FIG. 1.

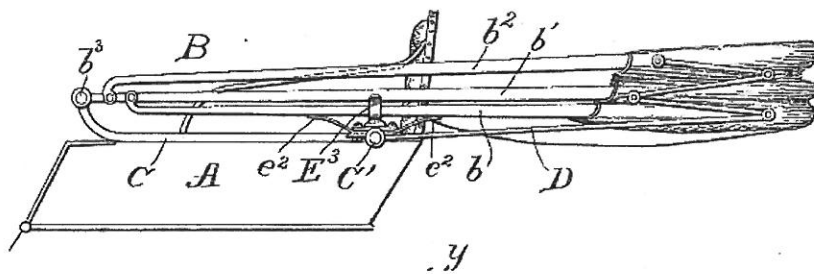


Figure 9. Patent drawing of the spring-support for buggy tops; artifact found at Rialto Village is labeled b3.